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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature on the effects of international culture on management education. Morden (1995) notes that what works well in one country may be entirely inappropriate in another. Obaldeston (1993) explains that business schools must employ teaching faculty with international experience, enroll a high proportion of students from other nations, and use teaching materials based on international business. Finegold (1994) points out that in response to increasing questions about the usefulness of the MBA degree, U.S. institutions are re-engineering programs to integrate contemporary topics such as information technology and internationalization into the curriculum. Other authors provide specific criticisms of graduate business programs in the United States, noting that MBA programs focus on technical skills to the exclusion of communication and cross-cultural skills; do not teach leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurship; ignore the importance of group dynamics; lack integration and global perspective; demonstrate little innovation in instructional delivery; and have faculty with little or no real business experience. It is concluded that cooperative efforts between business schools, corporations, and outside agencies would improve graduate-level management education. (Contains 15 references.) (MDM)

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INTERNATIONAL CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: A SYNOPSIS OF THE LITERATURE

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INTERNATIONAL CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: A SYNOPSIS OF THE LITERATURE

A rapidly developing body of knowledge about international culture and management is supported in the literature (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1994; Kay, 1993; Hofstede, 1990). A multicultural manager is one who can cross cultural barriers and become wholly accepted by foreigners, one who "is deeply convinced that all cultures are equally good, enjoys learning the rich variety of foreign cultures and has most likely been exposed to more than one culture in childhood" (Beeth, 1997, p. 17). The author applies this definition to three rules of multicultural business:

> Experienced international managers adapt to the culture at their location for the day when traveling abroad. When the same managers are at home, they will go more than halfway towards the attitudes, habits and language of a visitor who comes to see them for an hour or a day. However, if that visitor later moves to their home, thus becoming an expatriate, these same managers expect a complete change in attitudes, habits, and language. The local managers will even reject an expatriate who does not conform to her or his new surroundings (1997, p. 18).

Thus, a major issue of international culture and management is one of acceptance, especially if expatriates learn only superficial details as opposed to learning the new culture on a deeper, more emotional level.

Morden (1995) states that the process of international cultural interpretation and adaptation may be perceived through select motivational theories, such as Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960), and Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981). One problem with these perceptions is that they promote a universalistic view of the principles of management as they are applied in nations beyond North America.

> What works well in one country may be entirely inappropriate in another. In the face of cultural diversity, and the need to view international management from multiple perspectives, this apparent logic has at least two implications, namely: (1) Best fit: International managers and multinational companies may need to take a best fit or contingency approach to organizational and management . . . and (2) Polycentricity: Is defined in terms of the acceptance and use of cultural diversity. Organization and management are to an appropriate degree locally adapted (Marden, 1995, p. 20).

Obaldeston (1993) provides a model international manager profile and suggestions as to how business schools can help develop this type of manager. The model profile is based on the results of a study conducted by the Ashridge Management Research Group (1988). The key characteristics of the international manager are, in order of importance: strategic awareness; adaptability in new situations, sensitivity to different cultures, ability to work in international teams, language skills, understanding international marketing, relationship skills, international negotiation skills, self-reliance, high task-orientation, nonjudgmental personality, understanding international finance, and awareness of own cultural background (Obaldeston, 1993).

The author continues with the assertion that business schools have an important role in providing for the development of the key characteristics of international management. To do this, business schools must: (1) employ teaching faculty with international experience of staff from other countries; (2) enroll a high proportion of students from other nations; and (3) use teaching materials based on international business. Business schools should ensure a continual fostering of the international orientation of the faculty through active participation in international consortia.

Finegold (1994) reports on the results of a task force designed to improve the understanding of how managers in different national settings acquire their skills. The

objectives of the task force were to "identify the forces changing demands on managers; describe models of management development in five countries; analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each model; and draw lessons for educational/training institutions, firms, and policy makers" (p.12). Countries included in this study were Germany, Japan, Denmark, Ireland, and the United States. Concerning the objective "forces changing demands on managers," the results are similar to those previously mentioned as driving forces, specifically: globalization, customization, technological advances, and increased information/communication. Concerning the "describe models of management" objective, each nation has more than one model of management development, ranging from no formal training and company-based training to MBA programs. The author confined most of his discussion concerning the objective "lessons for educational/training institutions" to the MBA model.

> The MBA model was originated in the United States in 1881 at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of business. Graduate degree in business management became more popular in the United States during the early twentieth century, when highly regarded universities such as Harvard and Stanford added business schools. The number of MBA's granted in this country grew rapidly from the 1950s through the mid 1980s, climbing to more than 60,000 annually.
>
> The historical U.S. MBA model was a full-time, two-year program. The average student worked for two to three years before seeking an MBA. Firms occasionally paid the tuition for employees who promised to return after earning their MBA degree.
>
> MBA programs in the United States are now in the midst of major reform, prompted by an end to the explosive demand for the traditional MBA degree. Applications to U.S. business schools have declined appreciably in the last three to five years (Finegold, 1994, p. 17).

In response to increasing questions concerning the usefulness of the MBA degree, U.S. institutions providing MBA programs are re-engineering programs to integrate contemporary topics such as information technology and internationalization into the curriculum. The results of these reformative efforts are described:

> Full-time MBA programs are increasingly supplanted by part-time MBA programs. Executive MBAs (EMBA) programs were developed for working professionals who do not want to leave their jobs. In contrast to the traditional MBA, EMBAs are usually paid for by the student's employer. And whereas applications to full-time U.S. MBA programs have dropped, applications to part-time and executive programs have risen steadily in the past decade (Finegold, 1994, p. 17).

The author concludes with the observation that these trends could make MBA programs more like medical schools, where teaching, research, and practice are closely integrated.

Jacobson (1993) reports that the general feeling among business leaders, government officials, and some academicians is that present MBA graduates lack a number of skills necessary for effective business leadership. Other authors have provided specific criticism of graduate business programs (Hasan, 1993; Duetschman, 1991; Haynes, 1991; Behrman & Levin, 1984), such as:

1. MBA programs focus on technical skills to the exclusion of communication and cross-cultural skills. Thus, most MBA graduates are arrogant and lack communication skills.

2. Skills such as leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurship are not taught in MBA programs. Thus, most MBA graduates are theory-oriented and narrowly focused.
3. MBA programs ignore the importance of group dynamics, i.e., teamwork.
4. MBA programs lack integration and global perspective.
5. Little innovation has taken place in terms of instructional delivery.
6. MBA programs and their graduates lack understanding of quality and continuous improvement processes.
7. Business schools emphasize financial and analytical skills over manufacturing competence.
8. Business school faculty too often have little or no business experience and are often involved in scientific research for its own sake rather than for improvements in application to business practices (Bartz, 1991; Leavitt, 1989).

Based on interviews with corporate executives, survey results of Human Resource Directors, and discussions with graduate business school administrators, Neelankavil (1994, p. 48) recommends the following strategic steps to answer the criticisms previously mentioned.

> (1) Some basic changes need to be made in the selection of applicants to the MBA programme. Factors to be considered should include extensive business experience, the testing of applicants for business aptitude, and personal interviews to determine applicants' leadership potential. (2) Additional coursework should be introduced in the MBA programme either by eliminating one or two courses or

> supplementing some of the functional courses. Topics needing more attention seem to be ethics, entrepreneurship, global business, production/operations management, and quality management. (3) Areas important in the day-to-day work of an executive should be incorporated into regular coursework so as to strengthen the capabilities of graduates. The key areas are creativity and innovation, negotiations, problem identification, teamwork, thinking and thought processes, and communication skills. (4) Develop programmes to increase the business experience for faculty teaching graduate courses. (5) faculty and business administrators should regularly meet with corporate executives from those firms who hire their graduates. (6) Corporate executives should view the MBA graduates' education as a starting point and build on this to develop the potential of these graduates to handle more responsible assignments as they progress in the company.

Thus, cooperative efforts between business schools, corporations, and outside agencies would improve graduate-level management education.

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